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Friday, October 31, 2008

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THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Michigan soup kitchen serves up food, warmth

[By Joy McMillon](#) | [The Christian Chronicle](#)

October 30, 2008

For Kathy Weiss, working with the Wednesday soup kitchen at her home congregation is more than a service project.

It's her passion.

Weiss, a mother of four and a part-time U.S. postal carrier, has been in charge of serving free meals at the church in Lapeer, Mich., for the past four years. She plans menus, purchases the food, cooks and serves. More importantly, though, she cares deeply about the people who come to the kitchen.

So much so that she can't imagine ever wanting to quit.

"It would leave too big an empty place in my life," said Weiss, who oversees the eight-year-old Soup Kitchen project. "Once you see how much it's needed and appreciated, you're hooked."

The Lapeer church, now comprised of 220 members, began on the campus of Michigan Christian Youth Camp in Attica, Mich., and celebrated its 50th anniversary last month.

It is part of a group of five churches that offer soup kitchens on the other week days: Trinity United Methodist, Grace Episcopal, St. Paul Lutheran and First Presbyterian churches. They purchase food from the Food Bank of Michigan for the project.

The need for food in the area has increased due to the downturn in the economy, according to Sue Brady, director of Love in the Name of Christ, a clearinghouse for Lapeer County churches.

"We have families who go to a different soup kitchen each night, and it's going to increase more because the dollar isn't going as far," Brady told the *Lapeer County Press*.

On average, officials estimate five churches serve more than 300 meals a week and over 1,000 a month in Lapeer County, according to Ann Pfeifle, chairperson of the Lapeer Inner Faith Community.

At the Church of Christ, Weiss estimates that they serve anywhere from 20 to 60 each Wednesday night. Early in the month, when people get their Social Security checks and their food stamps, the numbers are lower, but as the month continues, the numbers increase.

The types of people coming for help also are changing, according to Jerry Brackney, an elder and family life minister.

"We have had core people who are out of work and on assistance for a long time, including senior citizens on a fixed income," he said. "Their numbers are increasing, but now we are having whole families coming in where both parents have lost their jobs."

The soup kitchen requires about 10 volunteers weekly. In addition to four adults who rotate as head cooks, the church's youth are a vital part of keeping the soup kitchen running. One Wednesday per month the teens help with food preparation and serving, another Wednesday night the pre-teens serve the meal and clean up afterward.

"Teens began the program," Brackney said.

Eight years ago, after visiting a soup kitchen at an inner-city ministry in Texas, they came home from their annual mission trip and wanted to start a soup kitchen at their church.

"This work isn't as simple as serving a meal," said Weiss, who does most of her cooking at home. "There's so much more if you will just dig a little deeper. Many of their lives are filled with multiple problems and (they) appreciate a listener.

"People spill their hearts out to us," Weiss said, adding that all volunteers try to get to know the soup kitcheners as individuals and help them in every way possible.

"We celebrate their birthdays with them, and we pray with them," said Brackney. They also invite them to Bible class on Wednesday

Michigan soup kitchen serves up food, warmth

evenings, and several have visited. One has been baptized and is a part of the church.

“We’re not just a soup kitchen,” said Weiss. “We want to share Jesus with them, too.”

Soup kitcheners are sent home with a sack lunch on Wednesday nights. On Thursdays, they can pick up a box of food and a winter coat, donated by church members.

“You just feel so great to be able to provide these little thing for them,” said Weiss, who heads up the church’s benevolent program.

The Weiss family participates in the soup kitchen as a team, viewing it as an opportunity to serve their community. Her children help cook and serve, and her husband, Ron, a policeman, uses part of his day off to sit down and talk with the guests.

Their service has impacted Weiss’s children. “My kids not only know that Wednesday is for church, they know it’s the day for soup kitchen, and they wouldn’t miss it,” she said.

“I think my kids will be doing this someday, too.”

Working with the soup kitcheners has not only met the needs of others, but it has also blessed the members, according to Brackney, who has been a minister at Lapeer since 1972.

“If we don’t serve and grow, then we aren’t doing what God has called us to do,” he said. “If people just sit on a pew and drop a few dollars in the plate each week, they aren’t going to grow.”

source :

http://www.christianchronicle.org/article2158549~Michigan_soup_kitchen_serves_up_food,_warmth



Thursday, October 30, 2008

Michigan Ranks 15th in Uninsured Children

UNDATED -- A new report says Michigan has the 15th-highest number of children without health insurance in the country.

The study released by Families USA shows that there are 142-thousand uninsured children in the state. Nearly 87-percent of Michigan's uninsured children come from families where at least one parent works, and over 59-percent were from a household where at least one family member works full-time year-round.

53-percent come from low-income families, that defined as those with income below twice the poverty level for a family of three--about 35-grand a year. Children in that final category are likely eligible for Medicaid or MI-Child.

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Consumers Energy: Heating cost projections down sharply

Posted by Kalamazoo Gazette staff October 31, 2008 09:20AM

JACKSON -- Consumers Energy says customers should expect to see their natural gas bills go up about 7 percent this winter, an increase much lower than the double-digit increases projected earlier this year.

The Jackson-based utility estimated today that the typical residential customer will see an average bill of about \$160 a month this winter compared to about \$150 a month last winter.

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THE STORY UNDERNEATH

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POVERTY: Governments Still Don't Do Enough

Zahira Kharsany

JOHNNESBURG, Oct 29 (IPS) - More than 116 million people in 131 countries across the world participated in the global "Stand Up and Take Action" campaign that became the biggest mass mobilisation on a single issue. Activists criticised the fact that the gap between the rich and the poor continues to increase, while governments refused to make poverty alleviation a priority.

The Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) and the United Nations Millennium Campaign said the Oct. 17-19 initiative sent a message to world leaders that citizens will not stay seated if promises to end poverty remain unfulfilled.

"[The campaign] is a wonderful statement of global determination and commitment to end the injustice of extreme poverty," said Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town and chairman of The Elders -- a group of former heads of state, Nobel laureates, leading entrepreneurs and philanthropists who contribute their wisdom, independent leadership and integrity to tackle some of the world's problems.

"116 million people demanded the right to food, water, health care, education and a life of dignified work for all. 116 million people have stood together to end extreme poverty. This message must be heard by leaders everywhere -- it cannot be ignored," he added.

Kumi Naidoo, co-chair of GCAP and honorary president of CIVICUS, a World Alliance for Civic Participation, said it was important to make "common people" realise that they can play a role in improving their livelihoods.

"In virtually every single country across the world the gap between the rich and the poor is growing at an unsustainable and horrendous pace and the gap between rich and poor countries is growing quite considerably too," Naidoo told IPS.

This needed to change, Naidoo said, demanding more commitment from governments around the world, who he said were more interested in spending money on boosting their countries' economies than on poverty relief. The recent collapse of global financial markets "showed that when there is a will, governments will mobilise," he explained, suggesting that governments respond to the poverty crisis with the same urgency than to the financial crisis.

Taking action

People's dissatisfaction with governments became apparent at "Stand Up and Take Action" events across Africa when people asked policy makers to be more pro-active in reaching the MDGs that aim to reduce poverty and child mortality, improve education and maternal health, promote gender equality and women's empowerment, create environmental sustainability and combat HIV/Aids and other diseases by 2015. In Malawi, for example, 600,000 people asked government for greater transparency and accountability.

In Rwanda, president Kagame joined 10,000 people who stood up against poverty at the Rubavu Stadium, in the country's Western Province. Kagame called on Rwandans to use their hard-won peace and stability as the foundation to fight poverty, create wealth and drive development for the well-being of the entire population.

Activists not only lobbied governments, but also religious leaders for support in the fight against poverty. In Egypt, millions stood up in mosques, and in Nigeria, the Sultan of Sokoto, Sa'ad Abubakar III, joined 20,000 people in the country's poorest state, Jigawa, in their call for the empowerment of women and other marginalised groups through skill acquisition programmes, empowerment schemes and access to micro-financing.

"This is a new kind of action the world is seeing: it's the local influencing the global," said GCAP co-chair Sylvia Borren. "Thousands of actions, pictures and messages show a powerful groundswell of determination and that a new global financial architecture must be about equality and gender justice."

"What we need is transformation of all issues from gender, climate change and education to poverty. We need to start seeing ourselves as a human family. Urgency is the message and it is a democratic challenge for local and national governments and for the global world," she added.

Poverty hearings

In South Africa, mobilisation against poverty already started in August, two months before the "Stand Up" campaign took place. NGO African Monitor, in collaboration with a number of other civil society organisations, held poverty hearings across the country to find out from ordinary South Africans what their needs are.

A report based on the hearings showed that more than half of South Africa's population is faced by extreme hunger and poverty, and entire rural communities go without food for days. African Monitor researchers also found that poverty in South Africa has deepened during the past ten years.

Kate Lefko-Everett, researcher of Institute for Democracy in South Africa's (IDASA) political information and monitoring service unit, said that poor people should be at the centre of efforts if governments want to develop appropriate and effective strategies to combat poverty.

"[At one of the poverty hearings in the Western Cape] many of the stories participants shared were poignant and stark, confirming that many people continue to live in extreme poverty 14 years into democracy," she said. "Teenagers told of dropping out of school because they were unable to afford transportation. Farm workers shared stories of land evictions and insecurity of tenure. One participant with a disability discussed his daily experiences of social exclusion and discrimination."

"[There] was a deep sense of frustration and hopelessness, particularly around issues of unemployment, lack of basic services and crime," Lefko-Everett further explained, and that needed to change.

(END/2008)

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Informing, Enhancing, Showcasing, Promoting and Educating Southwest Michigan and Northern Indiana

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Poverty Summit



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30.OCT.08

An Important Message from Ismael Ahmed
Director of the Michigan Department of Human Services.

One medical emergency, one car accident, one missed paycheck, or one layoff notice and a working class family can descend into poverty.

Because of this reality, I would like to personally invite you to join Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm, Martin Luther King III and me at the Voices for Action Network 2008 Poverty Summit on Thursday, November 13 at the Cobo Center in Detroit. The summit will address reducing poverty and maximizing economic opportunities for all.

No state has been hit harder by the national economic crisis than Michigan. We have lost hundreds of thousands of good-paying jobs. Our communities are dotted by thousands of foreclosed homes. And too many of our fellow citizens face the daily challenge of how they will support themselves and their families.

Twenty percent of people living in Michigan, including 500,000 children, are living in or near poverty. That's one out every five people and half a million children. Children living in poverty complete less schooling, earn less as adults, have poor health, face more criminal charges and are more likely to become a teen parent.

The Michigan Department of Human Services, the Governor's Commission on Community Action and Economic Opportunity, and the Michigan Community Action Agency Association (Voices for Action Network) are sponsoring the Poverty Summit.

The Poverty Summit embraces Governor Granholm's 2008 State of the State priorities of a job for every worker, education for every child, training for every

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citizen, health care for every family and safe places to live and work for all of us. This summit is not just a one-day event, but also a kickoff for a statewide initiative to reduce poverty and maximize economic opportunities by addressing the issues of health, employment, education, corrections/public safety, child welfare, race and poverty, aging/seniors and vibrant communities.

For more information or to register for the Poverty Summit, please visit www.michigan.gov/poverty. - [Benton Spirit](#)



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MICHIGAN REPORT

The Capitol Record Since 1906

REPORT NO. 211, VOLUME 47-- THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30 2008

DEPARTMENTS GEARING FOR POTENTIAL BUDGET CUTS

With the state facing uncharted waters should two of its largest corporations merge the likelihood of budget cuts in the 2008-09 fiscal year and of overall cuts in the 2009-10 budget grows. Already at least some departments are telling their staff that cuts will be needed, and one legislator has said it would not be surprising if at least \$100 million in budget cuts are ordered for the current fiscal year.

Administration officials, speaking on background, did not say that a specific directive has come from either Governor Jennifer Granholm or Budget Director Bob Emerson to departments telling them they must make preparations for cuts.

But in the last two weeks the discussions on preparing for all possibilities, including a wide range of budget cuts, has grown more intense and frequent, administration sources said.

At least one department director has told his staff that budget cuts will be made in the current 2008-09 budget and that projections for the 2009-10 budget will be cut from the current's year's appropriations.

Another departmental source said that at least one department is trying to fill some vacancies quickly because officials fear an absolute hiring freeze will be ordered.

Since the beginning of the 2008-09 fiscal year, which occurred on October 1, the speculation has been the state will be forced to make budget cuts this year with the national economy starting to tumble into a recession.

But what gives the budget cut discussion greater urgency is the possible merger of General Motors and Chrysler and what that would mean for the state's economy, state revenues and expenditures (see related story).

Sources said officials are also saying prepare for what would otherwise have been unthinkable: the collapse of General Motors.

"We're dealing with things that six months ago we would not have thought possible," said one source.

But before pulling the trigger on budget cuts, officials said they still have to see how the books close on 2007-08. They still hope for a larger cash overflow than originally had been anticipated.

October revenues accrue into the previous fiscal year. Earlier this week, officials said the month's revenues appeared a little down but that followed form as many payments are not made until the end of the month.

The other factor the state has to calculate is whether Congress will adopt another economic stimulus package that theoretically could help the states.

Earlier this week the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Budget and Policy Priorities said the 50 states could see a total revenue gap of \$100 billion by next June.

Budget cuts this year would have to come through an executive order, but no executive order can be issued until a Revenue Estimating Conference is held. The next conference is scheduled for January, but an earlier meeting can be held if any of the three participants - the state treasurer or the heads of the House and Senate Fiscal Agencies - request a meeting.

So far, no earlier meeting has been requested.

One Senate Democrat said he had heard from several sources that an executive order could total as much as \$100 million for the current budget.

That still is better than being forced to cut more than \$1 billion, the Democrat, speaking on background, said, and it shows that despite the political heat the state was right to act to boost the income tax a year ago.

Michigan Department of Human Services News Release

Contact: Gisgie Dávila Gendreau, marketing and public relations director, (517) 373-7394

Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board celebrates 30th Anniversary

Oct. 30, 2008

On Thursday, Oct. 30, District Court Judge Amy Krause hosted a Domestic Violence Awareness Month event in her Lansing City Hall court room. Governor Jennifer M. Granholm has proclaimed October Domestic Violence Awareness Month in Michigan. Thursday's event also marked the thirtieth anniversary of the Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board. Judge Krause chairs the board.

Program participants joining the judge at the event included: Susan Shoultz, executive director of End Violent Encounters, a Lansing domestic violence shelter; Rina Risper, a domestic violence survivor; and Karen Porter, quality assurance director for the Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board.

The board is appointed by the governor and charged with efforts to reduce domestic violence in the state. It is administratively housed within the Michigan Department of Human Services and administers state and federal funding for domestic violence shelters and advocacy services, develops and recommends policy, and develops and provides technical assistance and training.

Judge Krause reviewed the history of the Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board since its inception in 1978 and closed her remarks with a call for a renewed commitment to increased awareness of, and improved community responses to, domestic and sexual violence.

"Our passion is great," she said. "Our dedication is tireless. Our collective spirit is unbreakable. Together we will continue moving full speed ahead toward the day when domestic and sexual violence is no longer a part of Michigan and its great people."

For more information, please visit the DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/domesticviolence